



# Indiana Department of Education

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

## MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Anne Davis, Director of Special Education

RE: Recommendation to remove bifurcation of criteria for student participation in Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR)

DATE: February 24, 2011

ISTAR (also referred to as the 1% assessment) is the alternate assessment tool used in Indiana schools for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Originally, this assessment held a single explanation of criteria for student participation. At the time, there was concern on the part of the Department that the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) needed additional guidance in determining those students for whom ISTAR would be the most appropriate assessment tool. In response to that concern, the Office of Assessment and Office of Special Education separated the participation criteria two years ago.

During a recent Peer Review of Indiana's assessments, the U.S. Department of Education expressed concern related to this bifurcation, indicating this separation of criteria gave the appearance that ISTAR had become two separate assessments.

In response to the U.S. Department of Education's concern, it is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the attached ISTAR criteria which no longer separates the ISTAR participation criteria.

## Criteria for Determining Participation in the Alternate Assessment for Academic Competence and Independent Functioning in lieu of the general education assessment

*The SEA must establish and ensure implementation of clear and appropriate guidelines for Case Conference Committees to apply in determining when a child's significant cognitive disability justifies assessment based on alternate achievement standards 34 CFR 200.6 (a)(2)(iii)(A)(1)*

The case conference committee (CCC) determines, based on the criteria provided and the students' individual and unique needs, whether a student with a disability will be assessed on academic achievement standards, modified academic achievement standards, on alternate academic achievement standards for academic competence or on alternate achievement standards for independent functioning. If the CCC determines that a student will be assessed on alternate achievement standards, the CCC report must describe the reasons it is not appropriate for the student to participate in the general assessment or the modified assessment and include information in support of each of the criteria below. The committee must be informed that the decision to participate in an alternate assessment means that the goals describing grade-level proficiency typical of students who intend to receive a high school diploma will not be included in the student's individual education program.

**CRITERIA:** (All three criteria must be satisfied for a student to be eligible to be assessed on alternate academic achievement standards in either mathematics or English/language arts. In addition, the decision cannot be based on the exclusions provided below.)

1. **Presence of a Disability:** There is empirical evidence of a severe disability or a significant cognitive disability that precludes the acquisition of achievement standards necessary to obtain a high school diploma. However, there may be evidence that the student could achieve academic competence at a basic level.

2. **Intensity of Instruction:** Even when provided access to a differentiated general education curriculum and afforded extensive, intensive, pervasive, frequent, and individualized instruction in all settings, the student is unable to derive reasonable educational benefits, acquire, maintain, generalize, and apply academic skills across environments without significant individualized modification to content and performance expectations.

3. **Curricular Outcomes:** The goals and objectives listed in this student's IEP focus on progress within functional achievement indicators and extensions to the Indiana Academic Standards. The student strives to achieve the most basic self-help and communication skills and is seeking opportunities throughout the day to accomplish very individual goals.

### EXCLUSIONS:

The CCC's determination that the student will be assessed on alternate achievement standards cannot be based on factors such as:

- a. Excessive or extensive absences.
- b. Social, cultural or economic differences.
- c. The mere existence of an IEP or identification in a specific disability category
- d. A specific special education placement or services.

- e. Emotional, behavioral or physical challenges.
- f. Anticipated scores on ISTEP+.
- g. Concern for AYP calculations.

The Indiana Department of Education will utilize these criteria when reviewing or monitoring student education records for the purpose of determining eligibility to be assessed on alternate achievement standards and including alternate assessment data in federal and state accountability determinations.